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WARNING: ATTN BANGKOK AE
ATTN BANGKOK LOCAL

SERIAL: BK2707C75191

PASS: ATTN POL

COUNTRY: LAOS

SUBJ: NEWSPAPER COMMENTS ON MIA PHOTO CONTROVERSY

SOURCE: VIENTIANE VITTHAYOL PEAGSAT RADIO NETWORK IN LAO 0500 GMT 27 JUL 91

TEXT:

((TEXT)) VIENTIANE MAI NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED IN ITS TODAY'S ISSUE AN ARTICLE SAYING THAT THE CONTROVERSY REGARDING THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THREE AMERICAN PILOTS MISSING IN THE INDOCHINESE WAR IS BEING EXTENSIVELY COVERED BY THE U.S. MASS MEDIA. MANY MAJOR NEWSPAPERS EXPRESSED DIFFERENT OPINIONS, CAUSING CONTROVERSY ON THE FATE OF THESE U.S. SERVICEMEN. SOME SAY THAT THEY ARE STILL ALIVE. THE PRODUCER OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH, STILL UNIDENTIFIED, AFFIRMED THAT THOSE SERVICEMEN ARE STILL ALIVE AND ARE BEING DETAINED BY THE VIETNAMESE SIDE. THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE THREE U.S. SERVICEMEN IN THE JUNGLE WITH A SIGN GIVING THE DATE OF MAY 1990. A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION HANDED THE PHOTOGRAPH TO THE U.S. DEFENSE AND STATE DEPARTMENTS LAST WEEK.

THESE OPINIONS FORCE US TO GO BACK INTO OUR FILES ON THIS ISSUE. ACCORDING TO FILES GIVEN TO HANOI BY WASHINGTON, ALFRED LUNDY AND LARRY STEVENS WERE SHOT DOWN OVER LAOS IN 1968 AND 1969 AND HAD BEEN LISTED AS KILLED IN ACTION. JOHN ROBERTSON AND A COPILOT ELCHANAN FLEW A F4C AIRCRAFT WHICH WAS SHOT DOWN IN HAI HUNG PROVINCE IN NORTH VIETNAM ON 16 SEPTEMBER 1966. ELCHANAN SURVIVED AND WAS ARRESTED AND LATER HANDED OVER TO THE U.S. SIDE. A JOINT VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN SEARCH FROM 16 FEBRUARY TO 6 JUNE 1990 DETERMINED THAT ROBERTSON HAD BEEN KILLED. SOME OF HIS REMAINS COLLECTED AT THE PLACE WHERE HIS AIRCRAFT CRASHED WERE RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES ON 10 JANUARY 1990.

EVIDENTLY, THE NEWS ABOUT THE THREE U.S. PILOTS SHOWN IN THE MUCH-PUBLICIZED PHOTOGRAPH SAYING THAT THE THREE ARE STILL ALIVE IS GROUNDLESS BECAUSE ALL AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR CAPTURED IN THE VIETNAM WAR WERE RETURNED TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AFTER THE PARIS AGREEMENT ON VIETNAM.

IN ITS 21 JULY EVENING BROADCAST, THE VOICE OF AMERICA QUOTED CONGRESSMAN STEPHEN SOLARZ AS AFFIRMING THAT THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS FAKED. HE ALSO SAID THAT THOSE PILOTS SHOT DOWN EITHER IN VIETNAM OR LAOS ARE NO LONGER ALIVE. MR. SOLARZ DREW U.S. PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE PHOTOGRAPH MADE PUBLIC LAST WEEK WAS JUST AN ATTEMPT BY THE OPPORTUNISTS WHO WERE ABUSING THE WORRY AND SORROW OF THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL MEMBERS' FAMILIES.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE OTHER INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES ARE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE U.S. HUMANITARIAN MIA PROGRAM. THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE THREE COUNTRIES ALWAYS RENDER SERIOUS COOPERATION TO WASHINGTON IN SEARCHING FOR THE REMAINS OF THE MIAS

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AS WELL AS OTHER INFORMATION. THIS PROGRAM IS NOW PROCEEDING
SMOOTHLY. IN ANY EVENT, THE THREE COUNTRIES ARE WILLING TO
COOPERATE WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO CLEAR ALL SUSPICIONS AND, AT
THE SAME TIME, CALL ON WASHINGTON TO TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES AGAINST
THE PERSONS WHO WANT TO DESTROY THE ATMOSPHERE OF COOPERATION.
THOSE WHO CREATED THIS CONTROVERSY MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR
ALL ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES.
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